AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1.   (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

receiving one or more search criteria in an audio form, via an ~~audio-transmission~~ audio

transmission medium, from a user, the one or more search criteria including a

field of service desired by the user;

searching a service provider database according to the one or more search criteria to

generate a list of one or more service providers;

presenting the list of one or more service providers in an audio form to the user, wherein

the list includes one or more descriptions received from the one or more service

providers;

determining a selection of the user for a selected service provider from the list of one or

more service providers; and

connecting the user with the selected service provider for a live conversation via the

audio transmission medium.

2.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, ~~wherein the one or more search criteria in~~

~~the audio form comprises an audio request; and the method further comprises~~ further

comprising:

converting the one or more search criteria from the audio form into a database query to

search the service provider database;

wherein when the ~~audio request includes~~ one or more search criteria include a voice entry

of a search criterion, converting the voice entry utilizing interactive voice

recognition software; and

wherein when the ~~audio request includes~~ one or more search criteria include a keypad

entry of a search criterion, converting a signal generated by the keypad entry

utilizing a Dual Tone Multi-Frequency (DTMF) decoder.

3.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving a request from a service provider of a field of service for inclusion in the

service provider database; and

when the service provider is approved for inclusion in the service provider database,

generating a record in the service provider database, the record including provider

information contained in the request, wherein the provider information includes

one or more of specific expertise of the service provider, and one or more

languages spoken by the service provider.

4.   (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

billing the user for the live conversation with the selected service provider; and

compensating the selected service provider for the live conversation with the user.

5.   (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the billing the user further comprises:

measuring a duration of the live conversation between the user and the selected service

provider; and

calculating a billing amount for the user based on the duration of the live conversation

and a time-based price charged by the selected service provider.

6.   (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the billing the user further comprises:

calculating a billing amount for the user based on a flat fee charged by the service

provider.

7.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more search criteria

include ~~in the audio form comprises an audio request; and the audio request includes~~ one

of a voice request and a keypad entry response and ~~includes~~ one or more of a category of

service providers, a service provider price, service provider availability, service provider

specific expertise, service provider language and a service provider minimum quality

rating.

8.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

providing the user with an audio list of a wide array of fields of service available from the

audio portal service provider system; and

providing the user with a unique audio field of service code corresponding to each field

of service within the audio list of fields of service, wherein an keypad entry of a

field of service code is received via the audio transmission medium to select a

desired field of service for the one or more search criteria;

wherein at least one of the one or more search criteria is not a selection from an option

list.

9.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein following the connecting the user

with the selected service provider, the method further comprises:

responsive to completion of ~~once~~ the live conversation between the user and the selected

service provider ~~is complete~~, prompting the user for a quality of service rating for

services rendered by the service provider; and

recording the service rating provided by the user in the service provider database.

10.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein determining ~~a selection from~~ the

selection of the user further comprises:

when the selection of the user ~~audio request~~ includes a voice request, converting the

voice request into a database query language format using integrated voice

recognition software to determine the service provider selected by the user;

when the selection of the user ~~audio request~~ includes a keypad entry response, converting

a signal generated by the keypad entry response into a database query language

format ~~in order~~ to determine the service provider selected by the user; and

querying the service provider database according to the generated query to select the

service provider desired by the user ~~to enable connection between the user and the~~

~~desired service provider.~~

11. (Currently Amended) A computer readable storage medium including program

instructions contained on a computer readable memory to direct ~~that directs~~ a computer to

function in a specified manner when executed by a processor, the manner comprising:

receiving one or more search criteria in an audio form, via an ~~audio-transmission~~ audio

transmission medium, from a user, the one or more search criteria including a

field of service desired by the user;

searching a service provider database according to the one or more search criteria to

generate a list of one or more service providers;

presenting the list of one or more service providers in an audio form to the user, wherein

the list includes one or more descriptions received from the one or more service

providers;

determining a selection of the user for a selected service provider from the list of one or

more service providers; and

connecting the user with the selected service provider for a live conversation via the

audio transmission medium.

12.   (Currently Amended) The computer readable storage medium of claim 11, wherein ~~the~~

       ~~one or more search criteria in the audio form comprises an audio request; and~~ the manner

       further comprises:

       converting the one or more search criteria from the audio form into a database query to

              search the service provider database;

       wherein when the ~~audio request includes~~ the one or more search criteria include a voice

              entry of a search criterion, converting the voice entry utilizing interactive voice

              recognition software; and

       wherein when the ~~audio request includes~~ the one or more search criteria include a keypad

              entry of a search criterion, converting a signal generated by the keypad entry

              utilizing a Dual Tone Multi-Frequency (DTMF) decoder

13.   (Previously Presented) The computer readable storage medium of claim 11, wherein the

       manner further comprises:

       receiving a request from a service provider of a field of service for inclusion in the

              service provider database; and

       when the service provider is approved for inclusion in the service provider database,

              generating a record in the service provider database, the record including provider

              information contained in the request, wherein the provider information includes

              specific expertise of the service provider, and one or more languages spoken by

              the service provider.

14.   (Previously Presented) The computer readable storage medium of claim 11, wherein the

       manner further comprises:

       billing the user for the live conversation with the selected provider; and

       compensating the selected service provider for the live conversation with the user.

15.   (Previously Presented) The computer readable storage medium of claim 14, wherein said

        billing the user further comprises:

        measuring the duration of the live conversation between the user and the provider; and

        calculating a billing amount for the user based on the duration of the live conversation

                and a time-based price charge by the provider.

16.   (Previously Presented) The computer readable storage medium of claim 14, wherein said

        billing the user further comprises:

        calculating a billing amount for the user based on a flat fee price charge by the provider.

17.   (Currently Amended) The computer readable storage medium of claim 11, wherein the

        one or more search criteria include ~~in the audio form comprises an audio request; and the~~

        ~~audio request from the user is~~ one of a voice request and a keypad entry response and

        ~~includes~~ one or more of a category of service providers, a service provider price, service

        provider availability, service provider specific expertise, service provider language and a

        service provider minimum quality rating.

18.   (Previously Presented) The computer readable storage medium of claim 11, wherein the

        manner further comprises:

        providing the user with an audio list of a wide array of fields of service available from the

                audio portal service provider system; and

        providing the user with a unique audio field of service code corresponding to each field

                of service within the audio list of fields of service, wherein an keypad entry of a

                field of service code is received via the audio transmission medium to select a

                desired field of service for the one or more search criteria;

wherein at least one of the one or more search criteria is not a selection from an option

list.

19.   (Currently Amended) The computer readable storage medium of claim 11, wherein

following the instruction for connecting the user with the selected service provider, the

manner further comprises:

responsive to completion of once the live conversation between the user and the selected

service provider is complete, prompting the user for a quality of service rating for

services rendered by the service provider; and

recording the service rating provided by the user in the service provider database.

20.   (Currently Amended) The computer readable storage medium of claim 11, wherein said

determining a selection from the selection of the user further comprises:

when the selection of the user audio request includes a voice request, converting the

voice request into a database query language format using integrated voice

recognition software to determine the service provider selected by the user;

when the selection of the user audio request includes a keypad entry response, converting

a DTMF signal generated by the keypad entry response into a database query

language format in order to determine the service provider selected by the user;

and

querying the service provider database according to the generated query to select the

service provider desired by the user to enable connection between the user and the

desired service provider.

21.   (Currently Amended) An audio portal service provider system comprises:

an interface to an audio transmission medium;

an audio recognition engine to receive one or more search criteria in an audio form from

a user, via the audio transmission medium, ~~for a service provider~~; and

a processor coupled to the audio recognition engine and the interface, the processor to

search a service provider database according to the one or more search criteria to

generate a list of one or more service providers for presentation to the user in an

audio form, the processor to further determine a selection of the user for a

selected provider from the list of one or more service providers via the audio

recognition engine, and the process to cause the interface to connect the user with

the selected service provider for a live conversation via the audio transmission

medium, <ins>wherein the list includes one or more descriptions received from the one</ins>

<ins>or more service providers.</ins>

22.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 21, further wherein:

the interface is coupled to the processor to provide the user with an audio list of available

fields of service providers, accept a field of service desired by the user, provide

the user with a list of one or more service providers stored in a service provider

database which match the one or more search criteria and the field of service

desired by the user, and receive a selection from the user for a selected provider.

23.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 21, further comprising:

a network interface coupled to the processor to receive a request from a service provider

of a field of service for inclusion in the service provider database, and the

processor to generate a record for storage in the service provider database, the

record including provider information contained in the request.

24.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 23, wherein the provider information includes specific expertise of the service provider, and one or more languages spoken by the service provider.

25.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 21, wherein the interface comprises:

a public switched telephone network interface;

wherein the processor searches the service provider database to generate the list of one or more service providers based at least partially on information indicating availability for service providers to conduct live conversation.

26.   (Previously Presented) The system of claim 21, wherein the interface comprises:

a wireless communications network interface;

wherein at least one of the one or more search criteria is not a selection from an option list.

27.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the field of service desired by the user does not correspond to one or more selections according to a menu system; and said searching the service provider database is not based exclusively on one or more selections according to a menu system.

28.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more search criteria include an aspect of desired expertise of service providers for the field of service that is provided over the audio transmission medium, the aspect of desired expertise being not an a selection from an option list.